

[187 cont.]

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Tatishchev replied that he would not fail to make his submission known to the Empress. He promised him assistance and protection, but suggested, at the same time, that he swear the oath again. Abulkhair responded that he had already sworn the oath once, but in spite of this he was agreeable to swearing it again. At this the most senior member of the Moslem clergy was ushered into the tent with the Koran, and a [188] golden rug was brought on which the Khan knelt, and after having heard the reading of the oath, he kissed the Koran.

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Immediately after the ceremony Tatishchev put aside for him a rich saber mounted in gold which, as a special mark of favor, the Khan was not to draw except against the enemies of Russia. At the same moment the elders and the common Kazaks swore the oath before Tevkelev in other tents.

The ceremony ended with a feast, during which, in order to divert and astonish the guests, the health of the Empress and that of the Emperor were drunk to, to the sound of the cannon.

The following day Sultan Nurali, eldest son of the Khan, arrived in Orenburg. He too was shown great honor, although less than that shown to his father. He too swore the oath in Tatishchev's [31] presence and later received in the name of the Empress a saber mounted in silver.

The first meeting of the head of the Orenburg expedition with the Khan was soon followed by several others. Tatishchev and Abulkhair paid each other frequent visits, both in Orenburg and outside the fortress in the camp of the Kazak chief, in public and also in private. In these meetings it was settled:

1. That Erali Sultan, Abulkhair's son, who lived in Orenburg as hostage, should be sent back to the horde, and Khodji Akhmet, another son of the Khan should take his place.

2. That the Khan obligated himself to free and send back to Russia all Russian prisoners, not only those within the horde, but also those in all the neighboring lands.

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We will mention in passing that he could never have carried out this promise, and when he made it he knew the impossibility of keeping his word.

1756 avoids ailments which his power cannot cure, such as a broken leg. The shaman generally sets himself into a state of trance, in which he projects his soul into the spirit realm and there discovers the secret cause of some human disorder, cattle plague, or whatever problem faces him. [177] The Kazakh shaman, called bagsha, belongs to a hereditary profession. The patrilineal organization of Kazakh society is reflected in this folk religion: "The profession of bagsha is transmitted usually from father to son; this inheritance pattern bears the name of bagshylyk."

1756 This form of shamanism is widespread among the Turks and the 1771 Mongols, where the former have not been absorbed into the world of Islam, or the latter into the world of Buddhism. Kazakh shamanism is connected most intimately with the social organization of the people. [178] The practice of animal sacrifices conducted by the shaman in the case of severe or dangerous disease, the shaman's use of the drum or tambourine (Kazakh dabyl) in his ceremonies, the passing of a shaman's spirits to his son when the shaman dies, are all part of the fabric of Turko-Mongol religion and society, just as is the cult of ancestors. However, the Kazakhs have not lived in a vacuum sealed off from the Moslem world, for they have formed part of ancient empires thoroughly Islamic, in faith; the empire of Tamerlane, to which the ancestors of the Kazakhs belonged in the 14th and 15th centuries, was a Moslem empire. The bagsha's spirits are known among the Kazakhs as djinns, a Moslem term for spirits; the bagsha frequently invokes Allah, and the Arabic devil, Shaitan, is accursed and admonished.

1777 Elements of Islam have thus slipped into the folk religion of the 1779 Kazakhs, a process over which the Russians have had no control; Tsarist recognition of Islam was not needed to introduce these elements among the Kazakhs.

For an exact appraisal of the role of Islam among the Kazakhs, another ancient practice must be examined. The Kazakhs have traditionally believed in and made pilgrimages to holy places. In Central Asia one finds a vast number of such places, tombs of saints or of other holy men. These tombs, called mazar by the Kazakhs and Kirgiz, stand alone or together with several others within an earthen enclosure which forms a sacred psuuary.¹ Among devout Moslems visits to these places can even replace the pilgrimage to Mecca.

1777 In recent years the Soviet regime has been concerned about this practice. The Party Committee of the Pavlodar Region in May 1952 called for strengthening of the natural sciences and of antireligious propaganda, with special reference to a mazar in the Bayan-Aul District, which has existed for many years. The Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan was instructed to put an end to the legends regarding the saint in the tomb. The Academy formed a committee to visit the sepulchre and examine the matter, but the committee limited itself to inscribing certain remarks in the visitor's book beside the tomb. It was denounced by the Party for its lack of effort.² [178]

¹Contagene (27), 1936, pp. 67-73.

²Ibid., pp. 67-73.

³Contagene (29), 1951, pp. 46-50.

⁴Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 24 May 52.

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354 The hearth, around which the Kirghiz /Kazak/ love to sit, not only when eating, but also when conversing, is called "otbasy." There is a concept of happiness connected with it, and for this reason a sacrifice is given to it on certain occasions (see wedding).

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798 The yurt plays an important role in the life of the Kirghiz /Kazak/. The paternal yurt ("ul'kun chengarak") is considered sacred. Judgments of important /208/ questions affecting the whole clan take place in it. The wife of a son who has received his allotment is obliged to come to his father's yurt after the birth of a child, to bow there three times, and to put fat in the hearth.

[606] The Kirghiz /Kazak/ often [782] swear by the yurt

("kottukadam uyumde aiz etemen. ar' kimnei uz' de uzike meshet'" -- "I swear by the sacred yurt, my yurt is a temple of God").



Kirghiz /Kazak/ children by a yurt (from a photograph by Bebenin).

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672 Any person in a yurt is considered to be under the protection of the master of the yurt, and

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to offend the former is to insult the master. It is the custom, for example, to hitch gift animals to the door of the yurt, and if any sort of misfortune results from this (for example, if a horse kicks someone who is passing) the master of the yurt does not answer for it. And if something bad is caused by the horse of a newcomer, the latter answers for this before the court of the biy, since he is required to hitch the horse at the back of the yurt.

342 In general the yurt plays an outstanding role in the life of the Kirghiz /Kazak/, since it is the place where he passes his entire life and where his family relationships and those of his everyday life take their form.

674 Stealing among the Kazakhs is a rather
685 widespread crime. They steal horses, primarily. If the thief is caught there is the custom of taking the stolen animal away from him and adding to this a fine of twice its value. As the Kazakhs say - in such cases it is almost always a question of horses - 'on the neck an addition, to the tail a support' (in Kazakh: muinena kossau, kutenia-terkiau). This punishment is called 'aip' or 'aibana'. In case there are
695 no witnesses, the oath of some outside person is needed /346/ who is known for his honesty and who knows the accused. If such a person is found and wishes to give his oath on the innocence of the accused, then the latter is definitely released from the charge. It must be said that this is a very reliable way in
[577] general of learning the truth. It costs the Kazakh nothing to lie himself, but for some reason he will not consent to take someone else's lie upon himself.

In general, the oath, as soon as it happens between Kazakhs and not to aid an infidel, that is, a Russian, has a very serious significance and is considered sacred. At the present time it is usually given with the kissing of the Koran in the presence of an honored person or mullah, but earlier, various rites were observed. For example, it was necessary to lick the fingernail, looking at the sun, or to say the oath with the muzzle of a loaded gun in the mouth. This has already gone out of use
[778] today. In important cases, however, even now, those who are to swear are invited to some
● holy sepulchre and it is suggested that as they say the oath they cut off the branch of a holy tree there. It is a rare Kazakh who will consent to this sacrilege if it is a false oath.

771 to them. Indifference toward religious questions
[186] will be retained by the Kazakh, however, only
until /348/ he comes into contact with more
highly developed people, that is, until external
conditions affect him. In such cases, the
Kazakh will become more exacting in regard to
religious rites and questions, since, strictly
speaking, this religiosity is nothing more
than a previously hidden feeling of nationality
expressing itself in this form.

769 Among the religious rites of the Kazakhs
veneration at the tombs of famous ancestors
and the custom of praying in the cemeteries
are very remarkable. Earlier it was not dif-
ficult to create a Kazakh saint (aulye). It
was only necessary to be a bold robber and to
leave a fine estate so that the heirs might
build a great tomb, or else to be killed in
battle. At first the tombs of such persons
were visited by descendants (rodovichami),
then, in general, all those who came, looking
at the others, also began to pray and to bring
gifts. These presents are very unimaginative,
consisting usually of many-colored rags torn
from the clothing, or of bones, especially
horns and heads. All this is thrown and spread
out on the tomb and around it, constituting
[778] a kind of sacrificial offering reminiscent
of paganism. If a tree or bush which is rare
in the steppe grows in such a place then the
holiness of the tomb is increased, and prayers
said there are considered extremely efficacious
and pious, just as oaths there are considered
particularly binding.

659 At the present time our government does
not attend to the appointment of mullahs nor
to the building of mosques for the Kazakhs.